



Maryland Department of Planning

 **FILE COPY**

Martin O'Malley
Governor
Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor

Richard Eberhart Hall
Secretary
Matthew J. Power
Deputy Secretary

July 1, 2008

Ms. Melinda Stafford
Town Clerk/Treasurer
Town of Hillsboro
P.O. Box 128
Hillsboro, MD 21641

RE: Draft Hillsboro Comprehensive Plan

Dear Ms. Stafford:

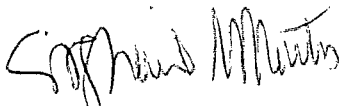
Thank you for providing the Maryland Department of Planning with copies of the referenced Comprehensive Plan for State agency review. The draft plan was sent to the Maryland Departments of Transportation, Environment, Natural Resources, Business and Economic Development, Housing and Community Development, Agriculture, and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. We have received comments from The Departments of Natural Resources, Environment, and the State Highway Administration, and they are attached for your consideration. Comments received after the date of this letter will be forwarded to you upon receipt.

Our planning staff has also reviewed the proposed update for consistency with the Planning Act of 1992, the Smart Growth Areas Act of 1997, HB1141, and other State growth management principles and policies. Our review comments are attached for your consideration.

Please contact me at 410-767-4500 if you have any questions about these comments or if we can be of any further assistance.

The Maryland Department of Planning looks forward to our continued planning coordination with the Town.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Martins
Director, Planning Analysis and Local Assistance

cc: Mark Gradecak
Shane Johnston – Peter Johnston and Assoc.

Maryland Department of Planning
Review Comments
Draft Hillsboro Comprehensive Plan

GENERAL BACKGROUND

During the 2006 legislative session House Bill 1141 was passed requiring Counties and Municipalities address several new elements within their Comprehensive Plans. Under the provisions of this law all new elements will need to be included into comprehensive plans by October 1, 2009. Guidance documents for the Municipal Growth Element and the Water Resources Element are available at the Maryland Department of Planning website (<http://www.mdp.state.md.us/>). MDP has reviewed the draft plan for compliance and offers the following comments.

MUNICIPAL GROWTH ELEMENT

Overall the Town has done a good job incorporating a Municipal Growth Element into the draft comprehensive plan. The Town has included a build out analysis (infill potential) in the plan and has linked this analysis to population projections and future growth management strategies.

MDP understands that the Town's future growth is limited by the lack of public water and sewer, which is reflected in the Town's population projections and infill potential. The Town is projected to experience a decrease in population from 2000 (163) of approximately 19 persons (144) (page 2-2). Correspondingly, the Town has not designated any future growth areas in the Plan. The Town estimates there is infill potential for 4 residential units and 2 commercial parcels.

PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS

Page 1-5- of the plan states that "Hillsboro is a PFA." It would be helpful if this section included a brief description of what a PFA (Priority Funding Area) is and what this means for the Town. Also a map showing the boundaries of each would be helpful. We assume the Plan refers to the current town limits (which are the same as they were when the Priority Funding Areas Act was passed). However, additional clarification would be helpful.

While the Town has neither expressed nor identified any areas for future annexation please note that HB1141 changed the requirements for designating PFAs. Annexations after October 1, 2006, must be submitted to the MDP for PFA certifications. Properties annexed into the Town do not retain County PFA status and do not automatically become PFAs.

WATER RESOURCES ELEMENT

Since all of the improved parcels are served with individual wells and septic systems, and all future improvements will use well and septic, the County should incorporate the land use nutrient loading impacts into the County Water Resources Element and inform the Town of its findings. This Plan should then be amended to incorporate an abbreviated WRE that assesses the Town's impacts on Tuckahoe Creek and discusses possible limitations on development in the watershed which the County may identify. Future coordination with Caroline County on

matters of development and environmental concern may need to be strengthened or formalized. Such issues could be addressed when a WRE is added to the Plan. The Town is reminded of the statutory requirement for adoption of such an element by October of 2009.

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

We encourage Hillsboro to pursue this coordination with the county and work to create a greenbelt about the town. Since Hillsboro lies between two pieces of the Tuckahoe River Rural Legacy Area (RLA), it might make sense to expand the RLA boundaries a little so that they are tighter around Hillsboro. Perhaps the county, MET, and/or the ESLC can prevail on landowners in the area to donate preservation easements. At the very least, the town and county should work to remove the county's residential zoning in the growth area around the town...provided that it causes no great disruption to the county's plans. Something like this is included in Recommendation #20 on page 1-15.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

An MHT survey noted 61 contributing resources to a 30-acre district between the Tuckahoe River and MD 480. The existing preservation, Heritage Area, and Scenic By-Way efforts are good, and so are the recommendations on pages 5-8 and 5-9. It would be good if Recommendation #13 said that the town should do something stronger and more definite than "encourage" the creation of a local historic district.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Page 1-8 discusses the Town's proposed 3,150 acre greenbelt area. This section states that currently 1,057 acres of the greenbelt are currently preserved. However, on page 4-7, the plan states that a total of 477 acres of the Hillsboro Greenbelt are preserved.

CORRECTIONS

Pages 2-3 and 2-4 incorrectly describe lot sizes. Page 2-3: "The average square footage of lots within the Town is 2,470 square feet. The smallest parcel is 800 square feet and the largest is 16,278 square feet. Only three (3) parcels are 10,000 square feet or more and half the parcels in Town are under 1,600 square feet." Page 2-4: "The average lot size for all parcels is 0.4 acres or 1,606 square feet." There are other examples. All these numbers should probably be multiplied by 10 or appropriately revised.